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Letter dated 31 October 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Liberia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon the instruction of my Government, I have the honour to forward herewith a self-explanatory letter addressed to you by His Excellency Dahkpanah Dr. Charles Ghankay Taylor, President of the Republic of Liberia (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Lami **Kawah**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 31 October 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Liberia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Having complied with the demands of the Security Council, the Government of Liberia avails itself of this opportunity to renew its call for the lifting of the regime of sanctions imposed under resolution 1343 (2001).

The Government and people of Liberia were assured that sanctions were to be applied in an even-handed non-porous way and that, having complied with the demands of the Security Council, the Council would be prepared to fulfil its commitments and have the sanctions lifted. The Council demanded that the Liberian Government expel all RUF members, cease all financial and military support to the RUF, prohibit the importation of uncertificated Sierra Leonean diamonds, freeze all assets of the RUF in Liberia and ground aircraft under the Liberian registry.

The Government of Liberia has expelled all RUF members, there is no financial and military support provided to RUF, a moratorium on the export of Liberian diamonds is being enforced, assets identified to be owned by individuals associated with the RUF have been frozen and licences of aircraft operators under the Liberian registry have been revoked. Confirmation of these and other measures taken by the Government of Liberia, in full compliance with the demands of the Security Council, has been documented and forwarded to the United Nations. More importantly, the report of the Panel of Experts pursuant to Security Council resolution 1343 (2001), in paragraph 19, concerning Liberia, revealed no violations attributable to the Government of Liberia since the effective date of the resolution. Alleged violations contained in the report precede resolution 1343 (2001). Paragraph 11 of resolution 1343 (2001) provides for the immediate termination of the measures imposed if the Council determines that the Government of Liberia has complied with its demands. Evidently, there exists no further basis for the continued application of the regime of sanctions imposed by resolution 1343 (2001).

Furthermore, paragraph 3 of the resolution stresses the intent of the demands of the Security Council as being to "... lead to further progress in the peace process in Sierra Leone ...". The Government of Liberia is particularly pleased to note the success of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) in achieving the substantial disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of RUF and other militias; the deployment of UNAMSIL and the extension of the authority of the Sierra Leonean Government into areas formerly under the control of the RUF; the return of weapons and other equipment seized from UNAMSIL and the release of abductees. 30 November 2001 and 14 May 2002 are dates set for the completion of the disarmament process and the conduct of national elections. It is our understanding from recent reports that all sides have expressed optimism that these dates are realizable and that the peace process is irreversible. Reaffirming the continued support of the Liberian Government to the Sierra Leonean peace process and the mandate of UNAMSIL, the Government of Liberia believes that the intent of the Security Council has been realized and all moral basis further removed for the continued application of the regime of sanctions.

Additionally, in sustaining the progress achieved in the Sierra Leonean peace process and in order to consolidate peace and security in the Mano River Union (MRU), high-level discussions have taken place in the three capitals, resulting in the

reconstitution of the MRU Joint Security Committee, essentially dedicated to resolve the plague of dissidents, operating to render our common frontier unsafe. A summit meeting of the three Heads of State, scheduled for early 2002, attests to the commitment of the MRU leadership to live in peace and resolve their problems through dialogue. The Government remains firmly committed to this process of dialogue and is reasonably assured that these initiatives will form the basis for sustainable peace, security and the realization of the objectives of the Mano River Union. To this end, the Government of Liberia renews its requests to the international community for assistance and support in the repatriation and resettlement of refugees and internally displaced persons and the revitalization of the various organs of the Union.

However, it is imperative to note that inequities in the administration of resolution 1343 (2001), especially paragraph 4, which states that "... all States in the region take action to prevent armed individuals and groups from using their territory to prepare and commit attacks on neighbouring countries and refrain from any action that might contribute to further destabilization of the situation on the borders between Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone", could undermine the ongoing efforts to consolidate peace and security in the Mano River Union and the West African subregion.

Seemingly oblivious to these numerous positive developments and the intent of resolution 1343 (2001), Global Witness, a British-based propaganda outfit, has launched a devious campaign, with funding assistance from a Liberian opposition group, to extend and expand the current regime of sanctions and prolong the suffering of the Liberian people. Politically motivated, Global Witness accuses the Government of Liberia essentially of the "reckless exploitation of the Liberian rainforest and the use of revenues therefrom to provide arms and ammunition to the RUF".

The capacity of Liberia's rainforest is widely documented by more credible international research. The German Forestry Mission to Liberia concluded in a report that Liberia has an estimated annual allowable cut of 3.2 million cubic metres (m^3) without endangering the environment. The total production and export volumes for fiscal year 2000 are below one million (896,586,108 and 626,657,090 m^3). Three hundred thousand (300,000) trees out of a total of one million are being grown for replanting. This active reforestation exercise will also cover grounds victimized by shifting cultivation and "slash and burn", traditional methods employed by local farmers.

A new national forestry law, enacted in April 2000, forbids clear felling, introduces environmental impact studies, increases the national forest reserves, strengthens the protection thereof, and reinforces the regulatory and monitoring administration of the Forestry Development Authority. Logging companies are by law only permitted to operate annually in land areas not exceeding 4 per cent of the total area of land mapped out in the concession agreement, and only trees which have matured to a specified diameter and have been identified, inspected and approved by the Forestry Development Authority are felled.

Evidently, the larger portion of the West African tropical rainforest exists in Liberia because of public policy as well as the commitment of the Government and logging companies to sustainable forest management practices.

More importantly, available statistics will reveal that the timber industry in Liberia provides employment opportunities for more than 10,000 individuals. It is further estimated that each employee provides livelihood for a minimum of 10 dependants. A total of 100,000 individuals are directly dependent on the timber industry for their livelihood. This is achieved by the payment of over 10 million dollars annually for salaries and benefits. This is in addition to the provision of free primary and secondary school facilities for children of all employees, with substantial assistance in the rehabilitation of public schools in rural Liberia. Timber concerns operate clinics and hospitals at their various operational sites, catering to the health needs of employees and other Liberians. In maverick agreements with the Liberian Government, timber companies have improved major roads and highways across Liberia, ensuring their accessibility throughout the year and improving the constant movement of goods and services throughout the country.

Revenues from the timber sector account for more than 8 per cent of the national budget. However, effective fiscal year 2001/2002, the Government of Liberia has instituted a policy which ensures that 100 per cent of revenue from timber is retained in the various political subdivisions for rural development. Undoubtedly, in the absence of the iron ore sector, the entire economy of rural Liberia, the home of at least 80 per cent of the population, is dependent on the agro-forest industry.

Additionally, as part of its programme to improve the value of its export, the Government has mandated the Liberian timber industry to install saw and plywood milling facilities and veneer plants. These measures will minimize the future export of round logs and increase the value of timber products. Additional and much-needed jobs will also be created. Implementation of this policy has already commenced with the ongoing installation in Buchanan of one of the largest plywood mills in West Africa, which should become operational by December 2001.

That the Liberian nation has been under attack from dissidents in Lofa County, northern Liberia, since April 1999 is an undeniable fact known to the Security Council. The unfortunate loss of Liberian lives, the wanton destruction of property and the massive displacement of inhabitants of the area are well documented and have been repeatedly brought to the attention of the international community by the Government of Liberia. It must be expected that the Liberian Government, acting under Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, would utilize every available means to defend its sovereignty, protect its territorial integrity and preserve its people. To this end, the Government of Liberia renews its request to the Security Council to permit the Government of Liberia to adequately provide for the defense of the Liberian nation and the preservation of its sacred heritage. It must be clearly emphasized that the Government of Liberia has neither the will, the means nor the desire to engage in hegemonic aspirations. However, preserving the state and defending the Republic are obligations that the Liberian Government cannot compromise.

The issue of the centralization of revenues of the Liberian Government, evidently an exclusive prerogative of the Government of Liberia, is, however, well settled. By Legislative enactment, the Central Bank of Liberia is the depository of all revenues of the Government. While the Government of Liberia will react favourably to international support and other technical assistance, the international supervision or monitoring of its expenditure will impinge on the sovereignty

authority and responsibility of the Liberian Nation. No responsible government will find such actions acceptable.

Returning to additional measures taken by the Government of Liberia to ensure compliance with the demands of the Security Council, the Government risked severe political and economic consequences when it banned the export of domestically produced diamonds. This action has left a considerable number of Liberians without a source of livelihood. But more importantly, the request of the Government of Liberia to the Security Council for assistance in the establishment of an internationally credible certificate of origin regime, alleviating the hardship imposed by the ban, has yet to be answered.

Finally, the severe social, humanitarian and economic effects of the sanctions on the Liberian Government and the general population are well documented in the report of the Secretary-General in pursuance of paragraph 13 (a) of resolution 1343 (2001) concerning Liberia. The United Nations humanitarian impact study report leaves little doubt that sanctions imposed under resolution 1343 (2001) are engendering punitive effects. The resilience of the Liberian people — having just endured more than seven years of civil strife, more than two years of ongoing insurgency, a paralysed economy, recording little or no international assistance for reconstruction and development, and damaged national infrastructures — is being stretched beyond its limits with the continued application of these sanctions. It would seem a matter of profound obligation to have these sanctions lifted or suspended. Contrarily, it will be unfair and unjust were the United Nations to be led into an extension and/or expansion of the application of the sanctions regime in achieving other and unrelated ends.

In the first report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1343 (2001) concerning Liberia, it was strongly suggested that "... the international community remain engaged with Liberia and its people" and you reasoned correctly that "external pressure without dialogue may not have a lasting impact on a country that is battling its own armed insurgency and is mired in deep political, economic and social problems". It was the hope of such a constructive engagement between the Government of Liberia and the international community which, in spite of the disagreements with and denials of accusations of gun-running and diamond smuggling, catalysed the policy of compliance with the demands of the Security Council, faithfully undertaken by the Government of Liberia.

The Government of Liberia recommits itself and looks forward to a more positive and rewarding engagement with the international community, particularly the various organs of the United Nations, and requests the Security Council, through you, to empathize with the suffering people of Liberia and have these sanctions lifted or suspended.

The Government of Liberia avails itself of this opportunity to assure you of its highest consideration and requests that you circulate this letter as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Dahkpanah Dr. Charles Ghankay **Taylor**